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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 001935

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [TRGY](#) [FR](#) [JA](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: PREVIEW OF CHIRAC'S MARCH 25-28 JAPAN TRIP

REF: A. PARIS 1588

[1](#)B. SEOUL 1456

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: President Chirac leaves March 25 for a three-day visit to Japan, at which the main topics of bilateral discussion will be ITER and the EU's China arms embargo, according to French officials. Also to be discussed are North Korea, Iraq, the EU-3's negotiations with Iran, Japan's campaign to win a seat on the UNSC, and economic cooperation. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) Poloff met with MFA Japan desk officer Stephane Louhaur March 22 for a preview of President Chirac's March 25-28 trip to Japan. The main topics of the bilateral exchange will be ITER, the EU's efforts to lift the China's arms embargo, North Korea, and Iraq; economic cooperation will also be discussed. Accompanying him will be Minister of Economy and Finance Thierry Breton and Minister Delegate for Research Francois d'Aubert, as well as some 20 businessmen. Separately, Chirac's East Asia advisor told us that ITER and the China arms embargo were the two principal subjects for discussion with the Japanese, as far as the French presidency was concerned.

[1](#)3. (C) The MFA noted that the two sides will issue a joint declaration, and that Chirac will emphasize France's support for a Japanese seat on the UN Security Council, noting the window of opportunity approaching with this September's Millennium UNGA. The declaration will also contain a statement on Franco-Japanese high tech cooperation, especially as it relates to sustainable development. (Chirac will attend the Aichi Expo, which has for its theme sustainable development.)

[1](#)4. (C) On the stalled negotiations regarding the siting of the proposed multibillion dollar International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor project (ITER), the MFA noted that Chirac wanted to raise the discussion to the highest political level. When queried as to whether Chirac planned to respond to the most recent Japanese offer, the MFA demurred and noted that Chirac himself was not bringing any particular offer. It's hard to know, Louhaur said, whether anything concrete will result. (Comment: The MFA Japan desk officer's comments are consistent with what France's chief ITER negotiator, Bernard Bigot from the Atomic Energy Commission, recently told EST Counselor. He said that the technical and financial issues regarding ITER between the EU and Japan had been fully explored between the two sides. All that remained was a political decision. End Comment)

[1](#)5. (C) On the EU China arms embargo, Louhaur said that the visit would provide a good opportunity to explain to the Japanese what the EU intends to do -- that is, according to the French, not just to lift the embargo, but to develop other steps (code of conduct, toolbox) which serve as effective controls on EU exports to China. Louhaur implied that these devices would alleviate any concerns about lifting the embargo. "We are conscious of the security situation in the region," he said, "and we want to show that we are paying attention to China's neighbors, who are the first concerned." He said Chirac would also tell the Japanese that the French are prepared to hold consultations on the issue with the Japanese to allay their concerns.

[1](#)6. (C) On North Korea's nuclear program, Louhaur noted the importance of the question for regional security as well, and said that the French would be looking to push European policy on this issue. He also asserted that the French had long supported the Japanese on the kidnappings issue, and that Chirac would bring the message that France would continue to do so, publicly. Louhaur noted that the two sides would also discuss Iran, saying that the Japanese are very interested in the EU-3's efforts to negotiate with the Iranians. Louhaur noted that the Iranians are an unpredictable regime but observed that the DPRK is even more so.

[1](#)7. (C) Iraq will also be a subject of discussion. Louhaur referred to the joint declaration on Iraq dating from then-foreign minister Villepin's spring 2004 visit to Japan, in which the two sides had declared themselves ready to cooperate on reconstruction -- beyond physical reconstruction, he emphasized. He noted that not much had come of the pledge, but said that now, little by little,

projects are beginning to take form, especially proposals to conduct training outside of Iraq. "We bring our savoir-faire," he said, "especially in archaeology or water management." The French side, therefore, apparently hopes to achieve more to this end in conjunction with the Japanese during the visit. Louhaur noted that Chirac will not be extending his trip in Japan to take some personal time, as had initially been the plan; instead, he will be back in Paris by Tuesday morning March 29.

Leach